

CLAIMS

1 A method of providing a pet with a benefit relating to effective assimilation of a lipid or lipid fraction comprises the steps of administering to the pet, as a part of, or in addition to, its regular diet, an edible composition that contains an intestinal mucosa function-promoter in an amount effective to maintain, improve or enhance the capacity of the pet to digest lipid.

10 2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the composition further includes a pancreatic function-promoter and/or a liver function-promoter.

15 3. A method according to claim 2 wherein the pancreatic function-promoter comprises a lipase or a pH modifier.

20 4. A method according to claim 2 wherein the liver function-promoter is selected from taurine, emulsifiers, vitamins, minerals, glutathione and glutathione promoters, and combinations thereof.

25 5. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the intestinal mucosa function promoter includes a fat transportation aid, agent or carrier.

6. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the benefit to the pet is related to at least one of gut function, outward appearance, pet-to-owner relationship, aging and general health aspects.

7. A method according to claim 6 wherein the benefit is related to aging, and is observable in any one or more of:

- Delayed onset of signs of aging;
- Amelioration of an age-related effect;
- Improved vision;
- Restored functionality of the digestive system in an aged pet; and
- Increased longevity.

8. A method according to claim 6 wherein the benefit is related to outward appearance and is observable in any one or more of
 - Improved body condition;
 - Improved muscle tone;
 - Improved skin and coat condition; and
 - A younger look.
9. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the composition is in the form of a nutritionally balanced, ready-to-eat meal.
10. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the composition is in the form of a meal supplement.
11. A nutrition management regimen for maintaining, improving, promoting or otherwise enhancing lipid digestibility comprises a dietary component for feeding regularly, according to predetermined directions, to a pet animal, the dietary component comprising intestinal mucosa function-promoter in an amount effective to maintain, promote or enhance the capacity of the pet to digest lipid.
- 20 12. A regimen according to claim 11 wherein the dietary component further comprises
 - A pancreatic function promoter and/or
 - A liver function promoter.
- 25 13. A regimen according to claim 12 wherein the pancreatic function-promoter comprises a lipase, a gut pH modifier or a pancreatic extract.
- 30 14. A regimen according to claim 13 wherein the gut pH modifier includes one or more of an acidifier, an alkalanizer, a buffer, a prebiotic or a probiotic micro-organism.
15. A regimen according to claim 12 wherein the liver function-promoter is selected from taurine, emulsifiers, vitamins, minerals, glutathione and glutathione promoters and combinations thereof.
- 35 16. A regimen according to claim 12 or claim 15 wherein the liver function-promoter is a nutrient that increases endogenous glutathione after ingestion.

17. A regimen according to claim 12 wherein the intestinal mucosa function-promoter includes a fat transportation aid, agent or carrier.
- 5 18. A regimen according to claim 17 wherein the aid, agent or carrier is selected from whey protein and proteases having the capacity to promote the formation of lipoproteins.
- 10 19. A regimen according to claim 17 or 18 wherein the intestinal mucosa function-promoter includes an anti-inflammatory agent, lactoferrin, a prebiotic or a probiotic micro-organism.
- 15 20. A regimen according to claim 19 wherein the anti-inflammatory agent is an omega-3 fatty acid.
21. A regimen according to claim 17 wherein the fat transportation aid, agent or carrier has a fatty acid profile specially-selected to improve absorption.
- 20 22. A regimen according to claim 21 wherein the fatty acid profile is polyunsaturated.
23. A regimen according to claim 21 wherein the fat transportation aid, agent or carrier comprises whey protein.
- 25 24. A regimen according to any one of claims 11 to 23 wherein the benefit derivable by the pet from effective assimilation of a lipid or lipid fraction is related to at least one of gut function, outward appearance, pet-to-owner relationship, aging and general health aspects.
- 30 25. A regimen according to claim 24 wherein the benefit that is related to gut function is observable in any one or more of:
 - Increased nutrient and energy digestibility;
 - Improved gut microflora, such as is observed in decreased small intestine bacterial overgrowth;
 - Improved fecal consistency and/or odour;
 - Optimized fecal volume;

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- Improved regularity of food transit time;
- Reduced flatulence;
- Enhanced gut detoxification; and
- Improved absorption of fat-soluble nutrients.

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26. A regimen according to claim 24 wherein the benefit that is related to outward appearance is observable in any one or more of:

- Improved body condition;
- Improved muscle tone;
- Improved skin and coat condition; and
- A younger look.

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27. A pet food product comprising an intestinal mucosa function-promoter for in an amount sufficient to maintain, promote or enhance the capacity of the pet to digest lipid, when administered to a pet animal regularly according to predetermined directions.

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28. The product of claim 27 further including an ingredient selected from the group consisting of pancreatic function-promoters and liver function-promoters and combinations thereof.

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29. The product of claim 27 or claim 28 wherein the ingredient is provided in a container for addition to a separately packaged complete meal or for administering apart from a meal.

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30. The product of any one of claims 27 to 29 provided in the form of a kibble.

31. The product of any one of claims 27 to 29 provided in the form of a complete meal.